

There are a number of numbering systems involved in the identification of U.K. perfins and unfortunately they differ from each other, causing confusion to users, especially newcomers. It is time that this subject was aired again for the benefit of those new to our subject.

The "Simplified Catalogue of Perfins of GB", now out of print, has a suitably simple method of numbering. In this catalogue all recorded perfins are listed, neglecting such differences as varying heights and differing numbers of holes. Each different (on this basis) perfin is given a number starting again at 1 for each letter of the alphabet and the full number comprises the letter and number, although the letter is not strictly necessary as it is identical to the first letter of the perfin. Where more than one perfin has similar lettering and layout, this is noted by means of the symbols " xx " or " ++ " following the entry. Blank numbers are included for further perfins which may be discovered. This arrangement causes some difficulties as new perfins may be out of alphabetical order. For instance the perfin AC/L was given the number 153 and as such it is after AC/WG which has the number 151 in the series.

The "Tomkins Catalogue of Identified G.B. Perfins" numbering system is based on that of the "Simplified Catalogue" and so continues the difficulty of not being completely alphabetical. The "Tomkins Catalogue" provides for separation of perfins of differing sizes and hole counts so where two or more perfins in the "Tomkins Catalogue" have identical "Simplified" numbers they are separated in the former by the use of decimal points, so that A3.1 and A3.2 are two differing examples of AA which is number A3 in the Simplified Catalogue. In an effort to avoid the problem of fitting new designs out of alphabetical sequence the method of numbering new finds has been modified. In the "Simplified Catalogue" B/B and BBB are numbered 48 and 49 respectively so when the new design BB/A was discovered it would have been given the next available number, B100, which would have placed it out of sequence after B.B./H. In the "Tomkins Catalogue" the new identity BB/A was given the number 48A, putting it in its correct alphabetical place between B/B and BBB. As the re-publication of the "Tomkins Catalogue" continues all perfins numbered out of sequence in the "Simplified Catalogue" will be re-allotted numbers using letter suffices to place them in correct alphabetical sequence.

There are two other catalogues of GB perfins, "van Lints' Catalogue of Illustrated British Perfins" has a numbering system based on its page numbering. A particular perfin is identified by a two number code, the numbers separated by a decimal point. The first number is the plate number of the illustration page on which the perfin is shown. The second number consists of two digits, the first is the line number and the second is the position in that line. For example, 17.72 is the number of the perfin CARR. There is no provision for inserting new discoveries, although acme spaces (such as 17.71) remain blank for later additions.

The other catalogue of interest in this discussion is the "Catalogue of British Perfins" by McKee & Tomkins (usually termed the Tilles Catalogue after the publisher). This catalogue essentially uses the same numbering system as the Tomkins Catalogue. However, there is no control over the provision of numbers for the new designs, although some unnumbered spaces are provided.

It is recommended that perfins be referred to using the number assigned to them by the "Tomkins Catalogue", which is widely available, but for those not identified and subsequently not in that catalogue, the Tilles number should be used. This latter catalogue is now in the process of revision, but this should not upset the numbering.
